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ABSTRACT

This book argues that what college students read has crucial implications for both their development as individuals and their ability to establish consensus on national issues. The result of visits to college classrooms all over the United States, the book is not the work of a professional educator but of an editor and literary critic who is deeply interested in education. It examines both the traditionalist viewpoint that abandoning the "great books" spells doom for America's educational system and the multiculturalist viewpoint that a White, elitist system fails to reflect America's multi-ethnic, non-European heritage. The book concludes that as ethnic groups reassert their identities and break from traditional assimilationist patterns, America's need for common ground is greater than ever, and that, unless there is a set of core beliefs upon which to build consensus, there may soon be no clear idea of America, no common heritage, and no unified future. (NKA)

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